



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Ren Southard, Acting Director, Department of Planning
DATE	April 14, 2026
SUBJECT	City Council Bill #26-0172 - Charter Amendment - Charter Committee Recommendations

Position: Favorable with Amendments

This bill has been referred to the Planning Commission for comment, but the hearings for this bill have been scheduled before the Commission will be able to schedule it for a public meeting and its consideration. Although Planning Commission cannot provide comments, Planning Department staff have provided feedback on the charter amendments related to the capital budget.

BILL SYNOPSIS

The current Charter requires the Department of Finance to submit the Ordinance of Estimates at least 45 days before the start of the fiscal year and to provide an additional 30 days' public notice prior to that submission. The proposed amendment would eliminate the separate public notice requirement and instead require submission of a final Ordinance of Estimates to the City Council by April 15.

The charter specifies that the capital budget portion of the Ordinance of Estimates should reflect the recommendations of the Planning Commission and cannot include projects that were not recommended by the Planning Commission.

The bill also includes a provision allowing the Council to add conditions for agencies to receive funding.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

Planning Commission Recommendations on Capital Budget

Each year, the Department of Planning submits updates to BOE based on the State budget and other new information that becomes available after Planning Commission makes its initial

recommendations. Given the charter’s intent to have the Planning Commission provide all capital budget recommendations, and the proposed accelerated date for introduction of the Ordinance of Estimates, the Department of Planning proposes an amendment to the charter that would allow Planning Commission to submit additional capital budget recommendations to the City Council after the Ordinance of Estimates is introduced to reflect the state budget and other new information that becomes available.

Conditions on Funding

The Department of Planning relies on timely and predictable access to appropriated funds to deliver our department’s services, including land use review and regulation, sustainability programs, community planning, historic preservation, food policy, capital budgeting, and more. In addition, all agencies receiving capital funds also rely on timely access to appropriated funds to execute capital projects. Project planning and project delivery would experience significant delays and risks, which would lead to significantly increased total project costs.

AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1:

On page 5, line 15, change April 15 to April 30.

Amendment 2:

On page 6, lines 27-37, revise as shown below:

a capital budget: estimates of the amounts to be appropriated to each municipal agency for capital improvements in the next fiscal year. The capital budget proposed by the Board also shall include the projects that the Board includes in the first year of its long-range capital improvement program and the source of funds for all capital improvements. ~~However,~~ No capital project shall be included in the capital budget portion of the proposed Ordinance of Estimates submitted by the Board of Estimates to the City Council unless the Board has received and considered the reports and recommendations of the Planning Commission, the Director of Finance, and the Board of Finance with regard to such capital project. HOWEVER, THE PLANNING COMMISSION MAY SUBMIT ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CAPITAL PROJECTS TO THE CITY COUNCIL BEFORE IT ENACTS THE ORDINANCE OF ESTIMATES IF NEW INFORMATION IS DISCOVERED AFTER THE BOARD OF ESTIMATES SUBMITS THE PROPOSED ORDINANCE OF ESTIMATES. The Board of Estimates may establish additional procedures for the development of a long-range capital improvement program and a capital budget.

Amendment 3:

On page 10, remove lines 18-20.

Furthermore, the role of the Planning Commission in making recommendations on the capital budget may need to be clarified. The sections titled “Notice and hearing” and “Assistance from

Finance Director and Planning Commission” originally referred to preparation of the preliminary budget, which has been eliminated. These sections should be reviewed and updated as necessary to preserve the Planning Commission’s role in preparing capital budget recommendations.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Sara Paraniham, Division Chief, Policy and Data Analysis at sara.paraniham@baltimorecity.gov.